New Fiction

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like comic relief at a funeral. This seemed a pity, because if treated a little more sanely and a little less in spirit of something between legend and miracle this might easily have been the author's biggest achievement.

FREDERIC TABER COOPER.

FAIR HARBOR. By Joseph C. Lincoln. D. Appleton & Co.

IT is right to say at once that "Fair Harbor" is entirely up to Mr. Lincoln's own high water mark. The ingredients are simple and familiar; but so are the ingredients of molasses cookies. The fact is, a majority of readers prefer for their minds, as for their stomachs, something they have tried and found eminently satisfactory. And this Mr. Lincoln has ready for them. Capt. Sears Kendrick, a mariner of renown, is stranded and living with his sister and her family. He is actually a pathetic figure, and Mr. Lincoln makes him such; at the same time the Lincoln humor manifests itself in the nature of the disaster that befell Capt. Kendrick. A train went off the track, but what really finished the Captain was a woman, a 300 pound woman, who fell on him and broke his legs. It also appears at the outset of the story that the Captain has lost his little all (as the expression went) in a badly managed investment. Forthwith the habituated Lincoln reader knows that the Captain's money will be returned to him, or replaced several fold, before the close of the last chapter. Such foreknowledge by no means spoils enjoyment. Whoever lost his appetite because he smelled the cookies before they reached the table?

These homely people of the Lincoln stories are very recognizable to any one familiar with the Eastern seaboard of the United States. There is little need to caricature, after the style of Dickens, and Mr. Lincoln does so only slightly. Where he distorts them most noticeably is in the injection of humor (of the homely brand) on almost every page. Yet, very often, the humor is entirely in character—as when, in speaking of the train wreck, Capt. Kendrick remarks that the engineer was killed and the 300 pound woman "carried her own punishment with her, I guess likely. Anyhow, I should call it punishment if I had to carry it."

Now as to the plot: There isn't any, to speak of. There never is in these stories of Lincoln's and there ought not to be. A couple of young people, a few perfectly genuine "characters," a pathetic (never pitiable) elderly man or woman or both, and some bonds apparently worthless that turn out to be good after all—you don't need much more. Plenty of talk, Yankee twisted, and an unfailing fertility in small episodes are far more important than the most magnificent plot. In the case of "Fair Harbor" little more was necessary than the idea of the institution which gives the story its name. This was an old residence set apart from its neighbors by a sign (hanging in the arched gateway) which read: "Fair Harbor for Mariners' Women. 'Without, the stormy winds increase; within the harbor all is peace.'" When, at the conclusion of Chapter II., we have seen Capt. Kendrick and Judah Cahoon lodged next door to the abode of the mariners' widows, sisters, &c., the plot is well begun and fully half done.

A great pity it is that so few of those who take pleasure in "Fair Harbor" will be able to appreciate how well Mr. Lincoln exhibits his nautical lore. He makes no mistakes, though perhaps he sprinkles sea speech a little too thickly in the conversation of Judah Cahoon; however, it will be accounted a part of the story's humor. There are sea chanteys here and there in the novel, but, alas, this isn't one of the Bubble Books and you can't play the tunes on your phonograph. We would suggest that the publishers insert a few pages properly perforated for the player piano, for a sea chantey without the tune thereof is a cookie without any molasses.

GRANT OVERTON.

LOVE AND FREINDSHIP; and Other Early Works. By Jane Austen. With a preface by G. K. Chesterton. Frederick A. Stokes Company.

THE importance of this volume of *juvenilia*, written by Jane Austen at about the age of seventeen, is largely an individual matter, depending upon the attitude which each reader severally takes toward the author of "Emma" and "Pride and Prejudice." If you happen to be one of those who really get the full richness of her inimitable pages; if you catch behind the stodgiest utterance of her characters the swift twinkle of the author's eye and share her perennial amusement at the foibles and weaknesses of human nature, you will read "Love and Freindship" with many a delighted chuckle and tell yourself, "How exactly like her! Of course she would have written that way at seventeen." But if you are one of that sadly numerous class that reads Jane Austen from a sense of duty and finds her dull, you are naturally rather bewildered by a piece of rampant nonsense—which Mr. Chesterton in his rarely discriminating preface has aptly defined as a "rattling burlesque"—and helplessly ask yourself what relation it can possible bear to such sober works as "Mansfield Park" and "Persuasion."

Such bewilderment is betrayed in more than one attempt already made to draw a far fetched analogy between "Love and Freindship" and that product of infantile precocity, "The Young Visitors." The latter is funny because of its unconscious absurdities; the former, after the lapse of a century, is still an abiding joy because of the deliberate topsyturvyness with which the romantic silliness of its age and generation is parodied. The astonishing thing about this juvenile work—never, of course, intended for publication—is the sureness of the author's touch, the evidence in every page that she knew precisely what she was doing, and delighted, like a good boxer, in putting every ounce of weight behind each blow. What she was hitting at, as Mr. Chesterton discerningly points out, was specifically the cardinal sin of the romantics of her day in their "glorification of ingratitude to parents, and their easy assumption that the old are always wrong." And he cites the utterance of the noble Youth in "Love and Freindship." "No! Never shall it be said that I obliged my father!"

It would be a pleasant pastime to trace down through all six well known novels echoes of the thoughts and sentiments revealed in the sheer exuberance of these youthful pages. Of course, the easy and obvious analogy to draw is with "Northanger Abbey," the whole joke of which turns on its ridicule of the inanities of "The Mysteries of Udolpho" and its like. But in all her stories, even in "Emma," the maturest and most deeply satisfying of them all, the serious situations, the trials and perplexities of her heroines are in most cases traceable to a single origin: the incurable romanticism of their generation; their assumption that they are wiser than their elders; their desire to attain happiness, not sanely and normally, but extraordinarily, through some special miracle of destiny.

For these reasons "Love and Freindship" should take an abiding place in all future editions of the author's collected works. More than that, it should form part of the introductory reading to any serious study of Jane Austen. Only in this way can it be made apparent to the general reader that Miss Austen was not a staid, middle aged spinster, gleaning sparse entertainment from a narrow environment, but a vital, living force that took humanity when and where she found it and shaped it into imperishable masterpieces. The difference between her earliest and her latest works may be summed up by the one word "self-discipline." It is the difference between the impetuous force of a mountain stream cleaving its way with the freedom of youth, and the same energy harnessed and controlled to polish with patient labor the facets of a diamond.

CALVIN WINTER.

GARGOYLES. By Ben Hecht. Boni & Liveright.

THERE is likely to be even more clamor about this novel than that which met its predeceseor, "Erik Dorn"; of enthusiastic approval and of sweeping condemnation. It is a vigorously alive book, often keenly penetrant, forceful and always sincerely in earnest. Mr. Hecht is not posing or trying to be awe-inspiring; obviously he believes thoroughly in himself. But his vision is strabismic, and his artistic equipment inadequate to the task he has set himself. The book as a whole is a blanket indictment of what he calls "Puritanism," of the suppressions, hypocrisy and filthiness that often lurk behind a mask of ascetic respectability. And in part the indictment is valid. Ascetic ideals carried too far do make for individual and group insanity. But as an analysis and a condemnation of modern American society *en masse* Mr. Hecht's snarling criticism is quite inadequate. It does not cover the case, and the trouble is that he pretends, and asks us to believe, that it *is* all comprehending. Thus, with much incidental, episodic truth scattered through it the book as an entirety is essentially false.

Like many other brilliant young writers of the day Mr. Hecht seems to see things in but two dimensions, whereas the existence of a third should be always borne in mind. And they are sometimes passionate in their denial of the possibility of a fourth dimension, though it is precisely that awareness of a something beyond the three familiar dimensions that makes the true poet. It results that the perspective of the book is vitally defective. There is, obviously, an abundance of prostitution, and doubtless will continue to be, but it by no means follows that each and every woman has the soul of a prostitute: there are very few authentic Galahads, but it is not true that every man is possessed of a sexual devil all the time or that his restraints and inhibitions are wholly due to cowardice and the fear of being found out. So, too, the crowd, the mob, humanity in bulk, is often brutally stupid, vicious and greatly afraid, but not all of its group ideals are base or "idiotic."

The hero of the piece, George Basine, in his incarnation as a Judge, conducts a "vice investigation" in its native Chicago as a political expedient—one of the best episodes in the book, carried through with grim, sardonic efficiency and a fine dramatic irony, as the Judge himself is at the moment also conducting an indecent intrigue of his own—and we read:

In fact, it was not the Basine Commission which pushed through the throng but the Tradition of the United States, the Revered Memory of Abraham Lincoln, George Washington and

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